

Yellowstone

National Park

Wyoming, Montana, Idaho



Horsepacking



Traveling in the Yellowstone backcountry with horses, mules or llamas is an exciting way to see the park. By their very nature, these large animals have the potential to leave great impacts on the land around them. To assist you in planning a safe, enjoyable, and low-impact trip, rangers have developed the following suggestions and regulations. Stock users must obey the conditions of their permits and all regulations identified in this brochure by a * sign.

Before You Start

Overnight stock use is not allowed until July 1st. Day use may be allowed before July 1, but is dependent on trail conditions. To be certain of which trails are open, check with park staff in the backcountry office where they can provide you with information on trail conditions, river crossings, and possible closures.

* The only pack stock permitted in Yellowstone are: horses, burros, mules, ponies, and llamas.

* Stock may not be left at trailheads or kept in front-country, drive-in campgrounds overnight.

* Prior to an overnight trip you are required to obtain a backcountry use permit which is available at most ranger stations. Permits for day use are not required, but day users must obey all regulations and should check at a backcountry office for any special conditions or closures. Stock may be kept only at campsites that allow stock. For a list of backcountry campsites available to stock parties, obtain a copy of the Backcountry Trip Planner which also includes information on making advance reservations and getting a backcountry permit.

During mosquito and fly season carry and use stock insect repellent.

* Stock selected for a trip in Yellowstone should be well trained, compatible with each other, and accustomed to the restraining techniques you plan to use in camp. These include picketing, hobbling, or the use of an electric fence. Saddle hobbles are also recommended (one pair for each rider) to help manage stock during your trip. Introduce stock to these methods of retention at home before your trip.

* Bring only enough stock to accommodate your party and equipment. “Ponying” extra stock is prohibited. Fewer animals make less work for you and have less impact on the country.

* The following are prohibited in the backcountry: hay, pets, weapons other than legally permitted firearms, food or equipment caches, and motorized equipment (including chainsaws).

* All feed must be processed to eliminate weeds and weed seeds. Certified weed-free hay is allowed in the front-country.

* Stock users must possess proof of a negative Coggins test performed within the last 12 months for all equine stock entering Yellowstone. The certification paperwork must be signed by a licensed veterinarian and be available for examination by Park Rangers.

At The Trailhead And On The Trail



You should plan to arrive at the trailhead, pack up, and travel to your campsite on the same day. For a list of campgrounds outside the park that allow stock overnight, contact the Backcountry Office.

* Manure at the trailhead must be scattered or (preferably) removed.

* Keep stock off roadways, except at designated trail crossings.


* Trail travel must be single file on the established tread. This prevents braided trails and damage to surrounding areas. Shortcutting or cutting across switchbacks is prohibited.

Exercise caution when approaching other parties on the trail. Anticipate problems and have your animals under control. If backpackers seem unsure of what to do, courteously offer instructions to permit safe passage.

* Stock groups may take day rides off-trail. One pack animal only may accompany the riding group to carry lunches, supplies, etc. Pack strings may not travel off-trail. It is strongly recommended that picket rope(s) or saddle hobbles be carried so that stock are not tied to trees. For additional recommendations, read Managing Stock in Camp.

* All pack stock must be led; loose herding or free-trailing is not allowed.

In Camp



- * Each back country campsite has a limit on the number of people and stock allowed at the site. Select campsites which accommodate your party size (prior to obtaining your permit).
- * No permanent improvements such as corrals, tables, or tent frames may be constructed.
- * Use only the fire ring already established in the campsite. Creating another fire ring is prohibited.
- * Extinguish your campfire thoroughly and sift through the ashes for unburned food and trash, which must be packed out. Remove all foil.

Managing Stock In Camp

Proper stock management is one of the keys to minimizing your impact and damage to vegetation. As a general rule, stock should be confined as little as possible. Restless, restrained animals trample vegetation, paw up tree roots and debark trees. Use whatever techniques you prefer, hobbles, pickets, electric fence, etc. ***Keep in mind that whatever retention method you use, it must be set up and/or moved often enough so as to prevent damage to the resource.**

Select grazing areas carefully. Locate grazing sites at least 100 feet from streams, lake shores, trails, and camping areas. Avoid grazing in areas that have already been heavily grazed and remember to rotate grazing areas often. Overgrazing weakens grasses, allows weeds to overtake native grasses, leaves nothing available for the next party, and ruins the beauty of the meadows.

Keep your stock in the core camp only long enough to pack or unpack. A shorter time in camp means less impact and less manure that must be removed. Core camp is defined as that area within 100 feet of the fire ring or cooking area.

* Manure in the core camp **must** be completely removed, and manure in the grazing areas must be scattered (kicked). Scattered manure breaks down quicker, and harbors fewer parasites.


Subsequent users will find cleaner campsites and fewer flies. Watch where your stock graze so you'll know where to look for the manure. Be prepared to spend extra time to locate and scatter manure throughout the entire grazing area, not just what you see on the way to and from your horses.

We have no corrals in Yellowstone's backcountry. Tying stock to trees or constructed highlines for short periods (tacking and/or packing) is permissible, provided it does not damage the trees or the vegetation. Do not tie to a tree smaller than six inches in diameter. It is not a violation to tie a horse to a tree or highline; *a violation is causing resource damage while the stock is retained. To avoid damage to trees, use tree saver straps or padding to protect trees. Some stock users prefabricate their low-impact highlines to make set up easier.

* Only dead and down wood may be used for picket pins and drag logs. Some users carry their own metal picket pins with them. Make sure your picket pins are pulled and not left in the meadow before you leave. Move picket and electric fence sites frequently to minimize grazing impact. Locate your picket or electric fence sites well away from the core camp and at least 100 feet from water or trail. Even if you use an electric fence, you still need to monitor your stock's grazing.

Yellowstone Trails Not Suitable for Stock Use	Osprey Falls Trail Wraith Falls Trail Sheepeater Trail Tower Falls Trail Artist Point/Point Sublime Storm Point Trails	West Thumb Overlook Monument Geyser Basin Harlequin Lake Trail Beaver Ponds Trail Upper Terraces Trout Lake Trail	Seven Mile Hole Trail North/South Rim Canyon Trails Avalanche Peak Trail Shoshone Geyser Basin Artist Paint Pots All thermal areas
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Safety In Bear Country



Proper food and garbage storage is essential to minimize the possibility of encounters with bears.

* All food, cooking utensils, food panniers, horse feed, garbage, and any scented items must be properly stored at night and anytime when unattended. Proper storage is at least 10 feet off the ground and 4 feet away from tree trunks. Food storage poles are available at most campsites. If food poles are unavailable or broken, it is still the responsibility of the user to hang any bear

attractants properly. Nose bags or ground cloths are recommended for supplemental feed. Wasted feed can become a bear attractant.


Report all bear sightings to a park ranger. Notify a park ranger immediately of any dead saddle or pack stock. Dead stock must be moved well away from any campsite, trail, or water.

* Feeding, teasing, or otherwise molesting wildlife is a violation of park regulations.

Suggestions For a Successful Trip In Yellowstone

Read this brochure carefully. Plan ahead and prepare. Please comply with all regulations, guidelines and Leave No Trace skills and ethics.

Loose graze, use electric fence, picket, or hobble stock when in camp.



Rotate grazing sites frequently.

* Avoid damaging trees and vegetation. Use "tree-saver" straps if constructing a highline.

* Scatter or remove manure.

* Store your food, garbage, stock feed, and any odorous items properly.

Anticipate inclement weather, biting insects, and emergencies. Bring the appropriate equipment for these conditions.

If you need assistance, contact a park ranger.

For more information contact Yellowstone's Central Backcountry Office (307)-344-2160 or via email at Yell_Backcountry_Office@nps.gov

"Packing unavoidably has a great impact on the country simply because horses and mules are big animals and have to eat. Packers have to accept this and make every effort to minimize the effects of their passing." —from Packing In On Mules and Horses by Smoke Elser and Bill Brown, two Montana horse packers.

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